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ABSTRACT

Strategies for improving the recruitment and selection of educational administrators are presented in this report. A recommendation is made for the development of administrator preparation programs based on collaboration between local education agencies, higher education institutions, the individual, and the educational administration (EA) profession itself. The elements of preparation should include clinical experience, formation of a training and hiring plan, development of student assessment criteria, expansion of the training function, and encouragement of continuing professional development. Program goals focus on practice as a source of a knowledge base for practitioners: "grounded" theory and programs that employ "situated cognition"; and expansion of delivery to include such things as problem-based learning, problem-finding, reflective practice, and education platforms. A conclusion is that recognition of the role of practice in both recruitment/selection and the content/process of instruction will engender the utilization of a practice-to-theory model. This shift will parallel the logical move in EA from a near total reliance on the quantitative research paradigm to a mixed quantitative/qualitative model that more nearly fits the practice of EA. One figure is included. (22 references) (LMI)

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GO AND CATCH A FALLING STAR

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GO AND CATCH A FALLING STAR[1]

INTRODUCTION

Recent major reports have raised again the call that Education must attract at least its fair share of "the brightest and best" to teach and administer our schools. The National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (NCEEA, 1987) and the National Policy Board (NPB, 1989) are two that stand out. Others have made similar urgings (Culbertson, 1988; Shibles, 1988; Culbertson, et al., 1969, etc) This all makes good sense and good press. The key issue is "How"?

Education will never attract many of "the brightest and the best" in the usual sense. Maybe a few of the brightest; maybe a few of the best -- but many of the brightest and the best? Forget it. Numerous studies have shown that the brightest and best don't opt for education and if they do, they usually leave. (E.g., Achilles, 1984, Sykes, 1983, Vance and Schlechty, 1982; Schlechty and Vance, 1981, etc.) Yet, we need to prepare administrators for schools, and we need the brightest and best for this task.

Once, in 1984, when visiting the North Carolina School for Science and Mathematics (NCSSM), a state-supported "private boarding school" for the state's "brightest and best" in science and math, I asked an assembly of about 200 students how many planned to enter education. Zero. Not one. Intelligence shows!

Although it doesn't always have to be this way, most administrators and aspiring administrators get to education administration (EA) via a circuitous route through work in schools -- usually starting as a teacher. To be "certified" for administration a person usually needs a teaching

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certificate and teaching experience. (This is not necessarily true for some specialties like business, personnel, or vocational positions).

SOME PRECONDITIONS

There are ways to attract, recruit and select top-quality persons to EA. Some will require refreshing new views of education and educating. However, without an individual's commitment, a basic interest in education as a way of life, probably no recruitment and selection ideas will work well. A precondition, then, to recruitment and selection success may be an individual's predisposition to enter education. This individual commitment is necessary because in choosing education as a way of life, the person probably:

1. Will make less "hard cash" than if s/he chose another line of work with the obtained degree(s)

2. Will be treated as a "professional in a bureaucracy", or worse. (The person will have professional knowledge and skills that s/he won't be able to use because of public policy, etc.)

3. Will need to attend school continuously to stay reasonably abreast of a burgeoning field.

4. Etc., etc.

This individual commitment, a sine qua non, is a type of self selection. People who don't like or want education won't go into education -- and they probably shouldn't. The pool is limited. The educator ranks are not flooded with hosts of graduates from "Big Name/Big Bucks" schools (Harvard, Yale, Amherst, Smith, Radcliffe, Sarah Lawrence, MIT ...). Interestingly, this picture of the social-class structure of educators is seldom discussed in the recruitment/selection literature.

SOME BARRIERS, EDUCATION'S BERLIN WALL, MUST TOPPLE

One way to consider the problem is to envision a world full of top-

quality EA persons. What barriers had to be removed to attract them? Looking backward from the year 2025, we might note that:

1. The hurdles have been leveled for top-quality candidates and graduates; they have been able to "break the glass ceiling."

2. Top-quality persons -- some other than the "good old boys" -- are not only hired, but they are appointed to line positions and offered chances to succeed in real-life school situations. Dan Griffiths, a long-time student of EA, has suggested that "Enrollment of women in educational administration programs nationwide is approaching 50 percent. The next job is to get them appointed to principalships and superintendencies. The easiest, quickest and surest way to improve the quality of educational administration is to appoint more women" (1988, p.13).

3. Personnel in many EA programs have begun to invite into the study of EA top quality people who, although they may have been in schools for 16-20 years, have not formally studied about schools yet and are eager to try their skills without following the usual career paths. False hurdles to entry in the field have been removed.

4. The field of EA has finally agreed upon a knowledge base and appropriate methods of inquiry to assess and advance that knowledge base. There is a code of ethics. The EA professors have important things to profess![2]

5. Professors of EA have to become a lively, challenging group. This has been long in coming. Griffiths (1988) noted that a major 1973 study of EA professors found a perplexing complacency and a poor intellectual climate in EA departments in the face of many problems of preparation programs (p. 20). McCarthy et al. (1988) found that this complacency still exists. These fairly recent studies extend a

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[2]Every profession I know of (except EA) employs a preparation model that puts trainees closer and closer to clients as the trainees move through the program. EA, on the contrary, takes people from the field to train them about the field. You figure it out!

legacy: H. Judge (1982), Willower and Culbertson (1964), and others. In the early 1900's some critics were quite harsh: "In any other profession the incompetent and brainless settle to the bottom, where they are impotent: the imposters, conjurors, and charlatans are soon placarded as such so that their colleagues may deal with them. But in pedagogy, they do not fare that way. They become Professors of Education." (DeVoto,1928).

Other hurdles must be flattened and handicaps adjusted if Education hopes to attract its share of the "Brightest and Best". The few mentioned here provide insight into a Herculean Task. Some solutions to the recruitment/selection problem, and those that seem to make sense are tied to the contexts of education and "grounded" in ways to help solve not only recruitment and selection, but also some other issues and problems of EA preparation.

GUIDING ASSUMPTION

Recruitment and selection are better served if they are not viewed as separate phenomena, but as an integral part of planned preparation programs. They are cooperative responsibilities of the individual, the hiring entity (usually the local education agency or LEA), the Institution of Higher Education (IHE), and the profession.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION ARE NOT IN ISOLATION

A discussion of recruitment and selection should include other elements of preparation. Attention to recruitment and selection can help an entire preparation program in several ways.

1. Recruitment/Selection and "Clinical Experiences"

School administration is an applied field. Skillful practitioners draw from diverse fields (e.g., Human Relations, Sociology, Technology), and from proven elements of past practice as they administer America's schools. The preparation of leaders for tomorrow's schools must include opportunities for new practitioners to practice the craft of administration in non-threatening environments under the supervision of

recognized experts and to share these experiences in common but structured ways with their own peers. Furthermore, a preparation program for an applied profession must include planned procedures for inducting new practitioners.

Any individual may learn the application of skills and theories independently, but a preparation program should provide opportunities for observation, demonstration, guided practice, and helpful criticism. Given the importance of clinical practice, faculty need to find ways to provide that clinical experience.

Proposition 1.1 Recruitment/selection of top-quality candidates can be tied directly to plans and sites for future "clinical practice." As a prerequisite to final selection, candidates should have identified at least a) the type(s) of field/clinical experiences they believe that they should have and b) potential locations and field supervisors (mentors) for the experience(s). This will encourage candidates and both IHE and LEA personnel to think carefully about the investment of time, funds and human capital about to be made.

Proposition 1.2 The process of considering seriously the clinical experience and tentatively arranging it in advance will reduce the self-select, drop-in student pool as it increases the pool of persons identified as having leadership potential and strong support from the LEA. As potential site selection is but one of many admission indicators, it will not exclude self-select candidates. In fact, this "recruitment" might send self-select candidates to have serious career-choice discussions with LEA leaders.

Proposition 1.3 This process will help to strengthen long-term relationships between IHE's and local education agencies.

Proposition 1.4 Etc.

2. Recruitment/Selection and the Training/Hiring Nexus.

The IHE's usually prepare people for credentialling for administrative positions. (Or at least they have done this. Some believe

that the IHE's need help in this task and are establishing alternative paths to certification. While they may have some of their own problems, alternative ways obviate the problem addressed here. People certified in this way usually are already employed in the certifying agency).

Proposition 2.1 If a cooperative (LEA/IHE) recruitment/selection process is established and shown to work, there will be increasing possibilities that those trained will, in fact, be hired into key administrative positions in the LEAs.

Proposition 2.2 Cooperative recruitment/selection will assure LEA personnel that the IHE programs are interested in LEA issues. In return, LEA's will be able to "stick to the knitting" and focus on their primary role of educating children and adults in the community.

Proposition 2.3 Etc.

3. A Recruitment/Selection Plan and Self-Selection

Currently there is little agreement on selection criteria for EA except a) prior demonstrated leadership should predict future leadership, and b) successful leaders are some (but not too much) more intelligent than those whom they lead. National commissions (NCEEA, NPB, etc) point out that self-selection is now virtually the only way people enter EA and that there is need for attention to recruitment, especially of minorities and women who have leadership potential.

Proposition 3.1 A cooperative recruitment/selection process may help identify a) new indicators that may be used in screening, b) those persons who have demonstrated leadership activity at the local level but who have not really considered applying for EA preparation.

Proposition 3.2 The IHE personnel should develop a "recruitment plan" to guide active recruitment and selection. This plan would identify the "mix" of students that the IHE group would like to see in a typical

cohort of prospective administrators. The recruitment plan would alert faculty to seek high quality women and minority candidates for each cohort. Might there be a full-time "recruiter" in some departments? Football teams recruit. Do we owe our children less?

Proposition 3.3 Some form of pre-admission "assessment" seems advisable in today's (1991) state-of-the-art. This assessment should be completed prior to a student's admission, with results available for the candidate to use in developing any special element of preparation (e.g., special courses, practicum experiences). Assessment should be the responsibility of the LEA, individual candidate and/or the State Education Agency. (SEA).

Proposition 3.4 Self-selection will continue to be a major way that persons enter EA (as in other professions and vocations). Since a considerable portion of advanced preparation is cerebral (writing, speaking, organizing ideas, doing critiques, developing and using data), one indicator should be some "measure" of a student's ability to do academic and knowledge work (knowledge is the business of education). Here "scores" such as the MAT, GRE, or similar tests of knowledge may be combined with prior academic success (GPA). Those entering education -- the knowledge business -- should not be at the bottom of the academic pecking order or knowledge domain.

Proposition 3.5 Etc.

4. Recruitment/Selection and Expansion of the Training Function

Emphasis on recruitment/selection processes and more active roles of "practitioners" as those who 1) help select candidates, 2) employ graduates, and 3) help identify "clinical practice" sites will offer some ways to expand the training function.

Proposition 4.1 With assistance in recruitment/selection and the early establishment of practicum sites will come an increase in "field

mentor" roles whereby exemplars of practice are identified to be field supervisors of clinical experiences. As these exemplars are identified, IHE faculty will establish continuing relationships and rely on these persons to be active in the clinical preparation of new administrators.

Proposition 4.2 As field relationships solidify, the "field mentors" will help trainees identify "problems of practice" that can become a focus of training/research activity on campus. This work should assist the LEA personnel by providing answers or solutions to problems, thus extending the training function into practical significance.

Proposition 4.3 One dimension of practicum experiences will become the candidate's personal involvement in some leadership activity to seek solutions to an identified LEA problem (Hughes and Achilles, 1968; Achilles and Hughes, 1971 and 1972). This guided active intervention will replace some of the "observation" and "shadowing" that now often serves as the practicum or internship.

Proposition 4.4 Etc.

5. Recruitment/Selection and Continuing Professional Development

The revised recruitment/selection process will keep LEA participants closely in touch with a) IHE persons and, b) concepts and ideas about preparation programs; it also will provide opportunities for discussion of education issues.

Proposition 5.1 The recruitment/selection process will encourage LEA personnel to stay current so they can serve the role of field mentor intelligently.

Proposition 5.2 Constant discussion of leadership needs of LEAs and reviews of the problems of practice will help IHE faculty stay current on LEA needs.

Proposition 5.3 Candidates chosen in this manner will encourage the participation of their LEA "sponsors" and "mentors" in planned training activities.

Proposition 5.4 Etc.

The focus on new recruitment/selection strategies should not only open new avenues to identify top candidates, help break down barriers to hiring, etc., but it will help generate a LEA sense of ownership in candidates and their preparation process. This sense of ownership will benefit the candidates, but it also will help IHE personnel understand both leadership needs of LEAs and the problems of practice that currently need attention.

Finally, three or more serendipitous benefits to preparation may be realized from improvements in recruitment and selection. These benefits will begin to transform the traditional ways that preparation has been delivered, ways that we have conducted research in EA, and the development of a professional knowledge base for EA.

1. There will be a focus on practice as a source of a knowledge base for practitioners. This will bring about more serious study of problems of practice.

2. There will be an emphasis on "grounded" theory and programs that employ "situated cognition" (see Prestine and LeGrand, 1989; Cognition and Technology Group, 1990) as a way to relate administrator preparation to the practice of administration.

3. There will be an expansion of the delivery (the modalities and processes) of preparation to incorporate such things as problem-based learning, problem-finding, reflective practice and education platforms. Use of real situations will replace "make-believe" and simulations/interactive modes will offer expanded solution options. Elements of adult learning theory (andragogy) and group learning

(synergogy) will replace pedagogical (i.e., child learning theory) processes now in use. (Why do we take people out of schools and put them in sterile IHE classrooms to teach about administering schools? When we answer this question satisfactorily, we need to match our content and methods to the answers).

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

As those who design preparation programs begin to recognize the legitimate role of practice in both a) recruitment/selection and b) content/process of instruction, professors/instructors will move away from sole use of the traditional theory-to-practice mode and begin to use a practice-to-theory mode. This shift will parallel the logical move in EA from a near total reliance on the quantitative research paradigm to a mixed quantitative/qualitative model that more nearly fits the practice of EA. One way to conceptualize the blending of theory/practice in preparation is in Figure 1, a model showing relationships of preparation to change processes. The traditional theory-to-practice preparation process has followed the traditional "scientific" emphasis of research, with heavy reliance on quantitative methods. More field involvement ideas may lead in an equal reliance on practice-to-theory emphases with careful use of a qualitative/quantitative research model.

The major concern of getting top-quality candidates into EA will drive a review and revision of recruitment/selection processes. Although self-selection and personal inclination to work in EA will still be important, expansion of the recruitment/selection responsibility will bring with it both planned and serendipitous outcomes that have promise of improving future EA situations. The planned outcomes will help EA get at least some of the "Brightest and Best"; the serendipitous outcomes have equally exciting possibilities. The change in recruitment and selection may be a logical way to begin even larger changes in the field of preparing leaders for better schools. This change does make sense, and that is unusual for EA; unusual for any field! Let's try: Now.

Leadership and Preparation Elements	Change Dimensions: Knowledge & Conceptual Control	Skill Building	Transfer of Skill	Independent Practice & Growth	Potential Outcomes
A. Study of Practice. Problem Identification and Analysis, Problem Posing. Separate Symptoms and Problems. Focus on Site-Specific Issues.	Self-Assessment. Reflection, Vision. Discrepancy Analysis. Site-Specific Org. & Problem Analysis. Nature of Problems.				Real or Discovered Education Problems that are Administratively Mutable
B. Study of Theory. Acquiring a Knowledge Base and Skills for Problem Solving and Improvement of Practice. Designing Improvement Strategies.		Self-Assessment Change Processes Evaluation Human Relations Communications Org. Development			Armementarium Necessary to Initiate & Evaluate Change & Improvement
C. Demonstration/Use of the Knowledge Base in a Leadership Setting; Evaluation of Results. Implement and Study Change (leader) Acts.			Mentor-Teams Practice in New Settings. Work in Community & School. Self-Assessments.	Continuing Synergistic Model; Reflection & Sharing. Move to Evaluating & Using Data.	Improved Education Practice: New Concepts of School, Culture and Professional Practice.
D. School Commitment: A Directed & Planned Emphasis on Improvement	Restructure the Culture at the Setting. Work to Establish the New Expectation. Develop an Organizational "Safety Net" to Allow Person to Use New Ideas, Skills and Strategies. Emphasis on Client (Close to the Customer).				Restructured School/System to Accommodate New Ideas & Processes

Figure 1. Model of progression of training showing three primary levels of emphasis (A,B,C) with selected examples. Level D shows school commitment and accommodation for new Activities. Traditional preparation programs follow the BAC Theory-to-Practice format; new models might try the ABC path, moving from Practice to Theory.

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